
EXHIBIT 2

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Project Summary
April 25, 2002

JOE RODOTA/WEST COUNTY RAIL TO TRAIL EXTENSION

File No. 02-024
Project Manager: Maxene Spellman

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to \$250,000 to Sonoma County Regional Parks to construct a new trail on former railroad right-of-way and to extend the regional Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail.

LOCATION: The proposed trail is located west of downtown Santa Rosa, east of the City of Sebastopol parallel to Highway 12 in West Sonoma County (Exhibit 1).

PROGRAM CATEGORY: San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy

ESTIMATED COST:	Coastal Conservancy	\$250,000
	Sonoma County Regional Parks	<u>150,000</u>
	Total Project Cost	\$400,000

The requested Conservancy funds are expected to come from the FY 2000/01 "Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air and Coastal Protection Bond Fund" (Proposition 12) appropriation for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program.

PROJECT SUMMARY: This authorization would enable the Sonoma County Regional Parks to add one mile of an eight-foot wide asphalt bicycle path and a four-foot wide dirt path to the existing Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail. Built almost entirely in an abandoned railroad right-of-way, this trail is the most significant uninterrupted regional trail in the County. The trail currently links four communities including neighborhoods and regional parks, the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetlands, and the California Department of Fish and Game's Atascadero Marsh Ecological Reserve. Serving one-third of the County's population, it is not surprising that this trail receives over 250,000 visitors a year. The importance of the Joe Rodota/West County

Regional Trail was also recognized by the White House and the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy, who designated it as a Millennium Community Trail in 2000 (Exhibit 3, News Article: “Joe Rodota Trail Takes Another Step”).

This project will also result in connecting the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail to the Bay Area Ridge Trail. In conjunction with this project, another one-half mile of trail will be constructed to extend the Conservancy-assisted one mile segment. Together this last 1.5-mile extension of the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail will intersect with the Santa Rosa Creek Trail in downtown Santa Rosa. The Santa Rosa Creek trail continues northwest through City and County parks, and Annadel State Park where there is a link to the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

Because of this project’s regional significance and the trail’s extraordinarily high usage, and the support for the project from state and County officials, and local citizens, staff ranked the proposed funding as a high priority. This project was part of the Conservancy’s 2000 solicitation for grant proposals for San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program Proposition 12 funding, and is now ready to proceed to implementation.

COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
April 25, 2002

JOE RODOTA/WEST COUNTY RAIL TO TRAIL EXTENSION

File No. 02-024
Project Manager: Maxene Spellman

STAFF

RECOMMENDATION: Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following Resolution pursuant to Sections 31160-31164 of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000) to Sonoma County Regional Parks for the construction of one mile of trail to extend the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail, as more specifically described in the accompanying staff recommendation and in the attached Exhibit 1, subject to the following conditions:

1. No Conservancy funds shall be disbursed until the Executive Officer of the Conservancy has approved in writing a final work plan, including a final budget, and any subcontractors proposed to be used.
2. Conservancy and Proposition 12 funding shall be acknowledged by erecting and maintaining on the property a sign which has been reviewed and approved by the Executive Officer.
3. The grantee shall enter into an agreement with the Conservancy to protect the state's interest in the continued use and maintenance of the improvements for their intended purpose."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

"Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed authorization is consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31160-31164, regarding the

EXHIBIT 2: April 25, 2002 Staff Recommendation

Conservancy's mandate to address the resource and recreational goals of the San Francisco Bay Area; and

2. The proposed authorization is consistent with the Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy on January 24, 2001."

STAFF DISCUSSION:

Project Description: The goal of this project is to assist in the completion of the heavily used Joe Rodota/West County Regional multi-use trail, and provide a link from this trail to another leading to the Bay Area Ridge Trail. The proposed trail segment will extend the existing trail, where it now ends on the west side of Santa Rosa, one mile into the City towards the downtown. The existing Joe Rodota Trail section, between Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, is named after the former Director of Sonoma County Regional Parks who passed away in 1997. The project will assist the Sonoma County Regional Parks to construct this one mile extension of the Joe Rodota Trail on an abandoned railroad right-of-way that the County recently acquired. An additional extension of one-half mile of trail into downtown Santa Rosa will also be constructed under a proposed agreement with a private developer.

Once completed, the 1.5-mile extension into downtown Santa Rosa will provide the public with a continuous multi-use trail from Forestville near the Russian River south through regional and community parks, the Atascadero Marsh Ecological Reserve, urban facilities, and east through the natural beauty of the Laguna de Santa Rosa, into downtown Santa Rosa. From there the Joe Rodota Trail will connect to the Santa Rosa Creek Trail that continues northwest through city and county parks to Annadel State Park, where there is a link with the Bay Area Ridge Trail (see Exhibit 1, Trail Map).

The Conservancy-assisted construction of one mile of trail will consist of an 8-foot wide asphalt bicycle path and a parallel 4-foot wide dirt path. These trail surface materials and dimensions are consistent with those of the existing Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail that this project would extend.

Project Financing:	Coastal Conservancy	\$250,000
	Sonoma County Regional Parks	<u>150,000</u>
	Total Project Cost	\$400,000

The requested Conservancy funds are expected to come from the FY 2000/01 Safe Neighborhood Parks, Clean Water, Clean Air, and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2000 (Proposition 12) appropriation for the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program (Bay Program).

Site Description: The proposed one mile trail alignment is within an existing railroad right-of-way on the west side of the City of Santa Rosa between two City roads. The developer-funded segment continuing into downtown Santa Rosa will become a “trail within rails” as it curves north into Railroad Square at the former railroad depot, now restored as a railroad museum. Together the one mile of trail resulting from this project, plus one-half mile of trail ending at the museum, will extend the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail to intersect with the Santa Rosa Creek Trail that traverses northwest through the City and eventually connects to the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

The proposed mile of trail plus the one-half mile extension will go through urbanized settings and into historic downtown Santa Rosa. Other segments of this trail also border residential neighborhoods, schools, shopping centers, and business parks. However, large segments of the trail traverse through some of the most scenic areas of the County such as the Laguna de Santa Rosa wetlands and the Atascadero Marsh Ecological Reserve. A significant benefit of the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail is that by connecting urbanized areas to protected open spaces, it facilitates public access to natural settings by the populations that live and work in close proximity to these urbanized trail segments.

Project History: Creation of the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail has been a focus of the County of Sonoma since 1984, when the Board of Supervisors directed the Regional Parks Department to proceed with acquiring the abandoned railroad corridor from Southern Pacific Transportation Company. The acquisition and development has occurred in several phases since 1988 as a cooperative effort among the County of Sonoma, the City of Santa Rosa, and the City of Sebastopol. Funding for the entire project was assembled from over 35 separate federal, state, and local sources, and donations from private individuals and local bicycle and rotary groups. In addition, with grants from the California Department of Forestry, a local group, Sonoma Releaf, organized two community tree planting projects in 1990 and 2000. As a result, hundreds of volunteers planted over 800 trees along the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail.

In 2000 four additional miles of the trail were completed that extended the trail to its current terminus on the west side of the City of Santa Rosa. In March of this year, the County successfully acquired the last 1.5 miles of railroad right-of-way. With Conservancy assistance the County is ready to proceed with construction, in conjunction with the developer-funded portion, of the last 1.5 miles into downtown Santa Rosa.

PROJECT SUPPORT: This project has strong and long-standing support from the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, Senator Chesbro, Assemblyman Joe Nation, the Rails to Trails Conservancy, local schools, the Santa Rosa Cycling Club, the Courtside Village development, and other private citizens (Exhibit 2).

**CONSISTENCY WITH
CONSERVANCY'S
ENABLING LEGISLATION:** The project is undertaken pursuant to Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Public Resources Code Sections 31160-31163, to address resource and recreational goals in the San Francisco Bay Area. Under Section 31162(a) the Conservancy may act to improve public access to and around the bay, urban open spaces, and ridgetops by completing regional trail systems that are consistent with locally and regionally adopted master plans and general plans. Section 31162(c) authorizes the Conservancy to assist in the implementation of the adopted plans of local governments. Under Section 31162(d), the Conservancy may assist projects that provide open space and natural areas that are accessible to urban populations for recreational purposes. As also required by Section 31163(d), the Conservancy is to give priority to projects that support adopted local or regional plans, are multijurisdictional or serve a regional constituency, can be implemented in a timely way, and include matching funds.

Consistent with Section 31162(a), (c) and (d), the project will connect the existing regional trail system to the City of Santa Rosa and from there to the Bay Area Ridge Trail, and will provide a continuous trail connection from urban neighborhoods to open space and natural areas. The project also serves to implement policies established by the Sonoma County General Plan (Policies 4.1 and 4.2 related to equestrian, hiking and bicycle trails), the City of Santa Rosa General Plan (Policies TCN 1a, 1b, 1h, and 1m), the 1997 Sonoma County Bikeways Plan (Policies A1-A4 and A12), the City of Santa Rosa Bicycle Master Plan (Policies TCN-1 and 1b under Goals and Objec-

tives 1.4), and the City of Santa Rosa's Southwest Area Plan (Objective 1.2 under Goal CSF-1).

The proposed project satisfies the criteria for determining project priority under Section 31163(d) in the following respects: (1) The project is supported by adopted local and regional plans; (2) The trail, including the proposed extension, serves four communities in addition to unincorporated Sonoma County; (3) Trail construction can be completed within one year; and (4) The project includes matching funds from the County of Sonoma Regional Parks.

CONSISTENCY WITH
CONSERVANCY'S
PROJECT SELECTION
CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted January 24, 2001, in the following respects:

Required Criteria

Promotion of the Conservancy's Statutory Programs and Purposes: See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.

Consistency with Purposes of the Funding Source: It is expected that the project will use Proposition 12 funds from the San Francisco Bay Area Conservancy Program made available for use with projects consistent with the purposes of Chapter 4.5 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, including projects that assist in the completion of regional trail systems.

Support: As previously noted, the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail extension has strong public support. See the "Project Support" section above.

Location: This project is located in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area, within Sonoma County. This project will expand a regional trail that spans an area to connect several of the County's jurisdictions and provide a connection to the Bay Area Ridge Trail.

Need: This project would provide needed recreational opportunities in Sonoma County by assisting in the completion of the most important regional trail system in the County. The annual number of visitors on the existing Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail is 250,000 visitors. According to Sonoma County Regional Park Visitor and Use Trends (1988/9 to 1996/7) the annual number of visitors per trail mile increased

172 percent with an overall percentage shift of total park visitors towards regional open space parks and trails. The addition of one mile of trail and its subsequent connection to a trail leading to the Bay Area Ridge Trail will help alleviate problems associated with increasing numbers of people using too few trails in Sonoma County.

Greater-than-local interest: This project will expand a significant regional trail serving a multijurisdictional constituency and visitors from outside Sonoma County visiting the California Department of Fish and Game's Atascadero Ecological Reserve, the regionally significant Laguna de Santa Rosa wetlands, and Annadel State Park, all located along the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail and the Santa Rosa Creek Trail which will connect with the Regional Trail as a result of this project.

Additional Criteria

Urgency: Given the rapid increase in the use of County trails, completion of this trail is urgent to help meet this demand. Indeed, the Southwest Area Plan, adopted by the City of Santa Rosa, anticipates the addition of 9,500 new homes to be located along the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail. Also, one developer has already provided a trail within an existing development which will connect to the regional trail, thus encouraging homeowners to use it to commute to school and work, and for recreation (See Letters of Support, Exhibit 2 – letter from Courtside Village).

Resolution of more than one issue: This project will solve pedestrian/bicycle trail access into downtown Santa Rosa from the unincorporated County where the trail currently ends. It will also provide the public with alternative transportation for commuting to schools, businesses, shopping centers, and parks located along the trail.

Leverage: The Conservancy's \$250,000 contribution will be combined with \$150,000 of County funds to complete the project. The County also recently acquired the one mile of railroad right-of-way for \$141,122 to make this project ready for implementation.

Innovation: The project will be constructed on a railroad right-of-way using an existing transportation corridor for trail purposes.

Readiness: The project is ready to proceed and is expected to be completed within one year.

Realization of prior Conservancy goals: When completed, trail users will be able to travel from Santa Rosa to Forestville, and on to the Conservancy funded Steelhead Beach Regional Park and Fishing Access project on the Russian River as well as other locations along the River resulting from the Conservancy's Russian River Public Access Program.

Cooperation: The creation of the Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail project has been an ongoing cooperative effort among the County of Sonoma, the Cities of Sebastopol and Santa Rosa, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, the Sonoma County Water Agency, private citizens, the Santa Rosa Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the Sonoma County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The Union Pacific Railroad has also cooperated as a willing seller of the 1.5 miles of railroad right-of-way to enable the proposed project to proceed.

COMPLIANCE

WITH CEQA: The Joe Rodota/West County Regional Trail Extension project is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) under 14 California Code of Regulations Section 15304 in that it involves only "minor public . . . alterations in the condition of land, . . . and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy mature scenic trees. . . ." Upon approval staff will file a Notice of Exemption for this project.